

9.9.18 The Modern Relevance of an Ancient Voice

Servanthood

We live in an age that, because of the general abandonment of the biblical worldview, has made status, position, power and identity politics the absolute good. A major function of education has become not the acquisition of knowledge but the enhancement and influence of unrealistic self-centric thinking. I call it passive aggressive narcissism. The irony in all of this, as we processed earlier, is that in the non-biblical worldview, humanity has no significance whatsoever. We are an electrochemical accident. If that were true, then the more we cut ourselves off from the transcendent Creator, the less significant we become. The result, can be clearly seen in the most prominent secular voices of the last one hundred and fifty years. Albert Camus (French philosopher of Absurdism), Jean-Paul Sartre (French writer of Existentialism - Nothingness), and Franz Kafka (Jewish-Bohemian writer of Realism), and finally German born Frederick Nietzsche (the father of Nihilism). Theirs is a downward spiral of the ultimate hopelessness of humanity and despair. At the end of the day the more we try to elevate ourselves by separating ourselves away from God, the less of us there is to elevate. Apart from God - we don't get better, we get worse. Marinate...

More than ever we need to hear the words of Isaiah, who tells us that the way to significance is not through arrogance and self-elevating but through humility, not to demand that others serve us but to serve others.

How much we need to recover from Isaiah the prototype for what the apostle Paul called “the mind of Christ.” This “mind” or attitude is almost completely foreign to us fearful and phobic descendants of Adam and Eve. We are so afraid of loss we can't talk about it, so afraid of discomfort we can't live with any of it, and so afraid of pain that we will sacrifice almost anything, or anyone, to avoid any of it. Yet, as Isaiah shows us, the way to real power is through powerlessness. Marinate...

If you share in any way my belief of that, then you and I need to be on the same page with Isaiah's teaching. We need to be reminded again of the foolishness of depending on human glory for anything lasting. We need to hear again that God can be trusted—trusted enough to lay down our own arrogance and pride. We need to be motivated in deep ways by the realization that the sole Creator of the universe, the just Judge, the betrayed Father, has not cast us away or forgotten us but rather has **chosen us to be the living evidence to the world that HE alone is God.** We need to learn or relearn that keeping His honor before the world is so precious, and that it is worth any price to him to find a way to renew his character in us.

All of us modern Christians who have allowed our ways of thinking to be reshaped according to this terribly wrong and toxic model, need to allow Isaiah's view of servanthood to reshape our outlook. Like the apostle Paul said nineteen hundred and fifty years ago “the cross is foolishness to the Greeks.”

Guess what? It still is - all of it. To win is to lose? To lose is to win? To die is to live? To live is to die? To rise is to fall? To fall is to rise? To take the lowest place is to sit with the King? To take the highest place is to sit in the dust? C'mon man - right?

Yet, as we who have found God in Christ know, all of that is absolutely true. But how are we going to believe that unless we consciously allow our minds to become saturated with that point of view? If we do not, the other understanding of reality will take us by default.

The Sovereign God of History

Considered simply as a philosophy (separated from God the Creator), transcendence has some serious weaknesses. This is why, apart from perhaps Confucius and Aristotle, it has rarely been considered seriously by philosophers. In the first place, anything that is utterly removed from the **psycho-socio-physical** universe would have no contact with that universe and could not communicate with it. Thus, transcendence would seem to be an interesting and perhaps useful intellectual process, but it would have no relevance to everyday life.

Both the Greeks and Confucius sought for a way around this by positing the existence of certain norms in life that reflect the activity and nature of this transcendent element, which Aristotle called "the Unmoved Mover"

and Confucius called the "Tao" or "Way." Why is it that no culture where everyone lies or everyone steals can survive too long? Is it not because there is a single, transcendent originating force behind all cultures? This argument seems to have been more persuasive in China than it was in Greece, because the following of "the Way" became a major cultural force through a great part of China's history, whereas this way of thinking had largely died out in Greece by the beginning of the Roman period. But even in China the Tao had no means of intervening in the life of the world to right any wrongs that might be there.

This highlights the second serious weakness of transcendence: the necessary impersonality of the originating force. One of the characteristics of human personality is its transitoriness. Our moods flit back and forth like hummingbirds. So do our affections and even our convictions. Surely the element from which all things extend and which forms the foundation of **all that is** could not have those characteristics. Furthermore, that force must of necessity be completely unconcerned with our response to it. It determines all things and is not itself determined by anything. All of this is much too ethereal and cerebral for most people caught up in the business of daily life, trying to survive for another day.

The other worldview, that of continuity, seems to offer a much more useful and practical way of understanding the way things are. Here the forces of the universe are given personalities on the analogy with us humans. But a study of mythology convinces one that the forces are forces still, only wearing masks that give them the illusion of personality and

approachability. But behind the masks they are just as inscrutable and implacable as any "Unmoved Mover." What the overlay of human personality does give them is an element of capriciousness and arbitrariness that is not good news.

So how do we arrive at the biblical view, which is definitely not the worldview of continuity, but neither is it the same kind of transcendence that we just described?

If we ask the Hebrews where they got their concept of God, they will tell us that they did not get it either by extrapolating from this world or by logical deduction. Instead, they tell us of a God who broke into their experience, revealing a distinct will for their behavior and calling them to submission and obedience. They tell us of a God who interacted with them in their choices and in the consequences of those choices, revealing a complex and many-faceted personality.

How can we ever find God, if he is truly transcendent? The answer is that we cannot. As the New Testament says it, "No one has ever gone into heaven" (John 3:13). On this point the philosophers are right. But suppose the philosophers' logic is too limited. Suppose the transcendent One can retain his otherness while intersecting his world at any point and in any time. And suppose the problem of personhood is ours and not his. Suppose it is possible to be fully personal and yet entirely self-consistent. Suppose it is possible to interact deeply and faithfully with other persons and never yet vary from what One is in Oneself. This changes the question of knowing completely.

If such a being chose to, he could come to us, somehow translating himself into terms we could comprehend. For the One who spoke the universe into existence, that kind of translation should not be so hard. But what language should he use? Should he use the language of nature? How can he? How can nature convey personhood? How can nature convey an intended will? How can nature convey the necessity of surrender and obedience? How can nature convey ethical absolutes that are a concomitant of a loving, committed relationship? The language God chose was the language of human interaction through relationships, the language we call history. Why is it that the earliest examples of extended works of history are found in the Hebrew Bible? It is because that is the arena in which God chose to make himself known. In the arena of human relationships, choices, and decisions, God revealed his nature and character and the nature of reality to his people.

The Hebrews would deny that their creation of historical narrative betrayed any special perception on their part. Rather, they would tell us that God simply broke in upon them and called them to make certain choices, telling them what would be the consequences of the various choices. When they discovered that those consequences did follow, we can imagine that they said to themselves: "It would be a good idea to record this so that when we come this way again, we won't make the same mistakes." That was precisely what God wanted. How could he teach them a complicated truth like monotheism, especially when all their more brilliant neighbors were polytheists? He could call them into a historical

covenant relationship, whose first stipulation was that they must worship him alone. How could he teach them he was not a part of this world, an even more complex idea? He could make it a covenant stipulation that they not make or worship idols. How could he teach them that there truly are ethical and moral absolutes? By requiring them to emulate the character of the one transcendent deity. Thus, their own historical experience became the basis for their knowledge of God.

All of this is portrayed for us in the book of Isaiah. There we see the truth of God being worked out in Israel's experience. Religion is not about mystic rites and rituals. Rather, it is about what you are going to do about the Assyrian threat. It is about how you treat the poor and downtrodden. It is about how you represent yourself and your God to foreign ambassadors. It is about how you continue to function when your entire life has fallen in on you, largely as a result of your own stupid choices. Religion is about ethics in daily life. This is the truth that is always in danger of being lost, and it is especially in danger now as the West progressively cuts loose its Christian moorings and all unconsciously drifts off into a pagan sea.

The study of history is dying around us. Why? Because such a study must believe that real choices are possible, that real progress toward a worthwhile goal may be made, and that there is a single overarching standard by which those choices may be evaluated and by which progress may be judged. Without these (and biblical transcendence is the only basis for them) the whole reason for studying the past at all is lost. The only thing that matters is me, now. Who cares what some old dead people

did? As for learning from them, that's crazy. We all do what we have to do. The past is gone, and the future will be more of today, only maybe worse.

So what can counter these tendencies? A strong dose of the truth of Isaiah, that there is a God who is at work in the corporate history and in our individual histories. We can know him in the daily experiences of life, as the Israelites did. Knowing him in that way, we can then recover for ourselves, and maybe for our culture, the reality that human choices matter, that we are headed somewhere, and that the transcendent God is calling us to go with him.

Realization of Righteousness

One of the chief values of studying the New Testament in the context of the Old is the corrective value of the Old. Many of the weaknesses in the church today are a result of misreading the New Testament because of ignorance of the Old Testament. For instance, the excessive individualism and privatism of the modern evangelical church is only possible if one is almost wholly ignorant of the Old Testament. To be sure, the Old Testament cannot be read alone. To do so is to fall into the opposite ditch from the one into which exclusive New Testament readers fall. By reading the Old Testament alone, one can easily miss the love of God that is clearly there and come to see him only as an austere and implacable Judge. But when the two Testaments are read together, there is a wholistic, invaluable presentation of the truth.

Because Isaiah sums up so many of the Old Testament teachings, it is especially helpful in achieving a balanced theology. One of these areas of balance desperately needed today is in the area of realized righteousness. Modern evangelical theology has become dangerously one-sided, and this is especially apparent in American public life. At the same time that evangelicalism has become the dominant expression of Christian faith in America, public morality has collapsed. Is this a coincidence? I don't think so. Reacting against the loss of a concept of personal salvation in the so-called mainline denominations and mega churches and an increasingly cultic mentality in the holiness movement, evangelical theology in the first half of the twentieth century put increasing emphasis on "imputed righteousness." That is, God calls us righteous because we have accepted the saving work of Christ on the cross. There was a strong reaction against "works righteousness" with its suggestion that one could somehow earn merit with God by doing good things. Gaining this understanding can be liberating. We don't have to wonder whether our behavior is good enough to deserve a relationship with God; we can know we are His simply because we have accepted his offer of eternal life in his Son. This is not hype - this is genuinely good news.

But the problem with this overemphasis on "subjective righteousness" is that it cuts the nerve of "objective righteousness." The believer can easily feel that in the end his or her actual behavior is of little significance. If this is then coupled with a false idea of the security of the believer, the effect can be spiritually harmful. We can essentially live in conscious sin, secure in the fact that God sees us as righteous and that we can never lose our

salvation. Thus, we see persons in the highest offices in the land claiming to be “born-again Christians” while living lives of conspicuous immorality and showing neither remorse nor repentance when caught. This is why the voice of Isaiah is relevant and needs to be heard today - 2018! **The people of God must manifest in our lifestyle the life and love of God, or give up the right to be called the people of God.**

As always, the truth has two sides, and Isaiah makes this masterfully clear. On the one hand, it is true that in ourselves we are incapable of being righteous on the standard required of us by God. We are doomed to failure and deserve the condemnation that comes on that failure. We cannot ourselves to God by ourselves, and the failure of the good Hezekiah underlines that point. If we are ever to have a relationship with God, it must be on the basis of **His grace alone**. He must come to us as he did to the captive Judeans with words of comfort and grace, assuring us that he has not cast us off and that he has provided a means through his Servant whereby we may be restored to a life-giving relationship with our Father. That is one side of the truth, a side that dare not be lost.

But there is another side that equally dares not to be lost. This is the truth relating to the whole purpose of salvation. Why does God bring us into a relationship with him? A google view based on a misreading of the New Testament alone would say that it is so we can spend an eternity of bliss praising our Savior. This is an incredibly self-serving picture, both from a human and divine point of view. That is not, however, the New Testament teaching, as becomes clear when we read the two Testaments together.

God calls us into a relationship with him so that his original purpose may be realized for us. What is that purpose? That he might share his character with us. This is obvious from the covenant. God's purpose in giving the covenant is so that the people might be holy as he is holy. Such holiness is not an unhealthy cultic thing but a way of right and peacefully living in the world and with other people.

As discussed above, Isaiah represents this point in a powerful way in chapters 56–66, where he synthesizes the demand for righteousness from chapters 1–39 with the offer of free grace in chapters 40–55. In chapters 56–66, Isaiah, just as much as Paul does in his letters, asks what that grace was for. Was it in order that God's people should revel in their chosen-ness while engaging in religious practices that were self-serving and ultimately perverse? Of course not! It was in order that they should live lives of justice and righteousness and in so doing become a lamp through which God's light should shine on the nations.

But how is that possible, given a long history of failure? It is possible through the same grace that restored you to a relationship with God in the first place. The demand is from God, but so is the provision. Clearly Isaiah is not promoting some arrogant claim to having arrived spiritually. Nor is he suggesting that the believer's relationship with God is ever on any basis but divine grace. But he is saying that if a believer is not a conduit for the Holy Spirit's righteousness (32:15–16; 44:1–5), then he or she is missing a large portion of what the grace of God came to do.

And, if we miss this grace and the true righteousness of God then we have missed the Messiah...

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Historical and Archaeological Context

The Setting: Judah/Jerusalem - Southern Kingdom/Israel

The Date: Approximately 720 - 690 B.C.

Historical and Political Climate: Sennaherib was the King of Assyria the strongest political and military power in the known world in and around the same time of Hezekiah. He had cruelly attacked and punished the various peoples and cultures who had dared to defy him openly or secretly. He suppressed the revolt of Babylon, and after he had defeated all his enemies in the east and north, he went west to punish Phoenicia, the Philistines, the Samaritans and the entire Southern Kingdom and peoples of Israel. Sennaherib exiled the native populations of the various countries and resettled them in different places in order to undermine their national spirit and sever their ties to their soil and nationalism.

Sennaherib's governors supplanted the native kings and administration were centralized in Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. After all of this aggression and tyrannical measures murder and destruction, Sennaherib marched against Jerusalem.

It was the prophet Isaiah who strengthened Hezekiah the King of Judah (Southern Kingdom - Israel) with Divine assurances that no nation would be able to do harm to the land as long as the people went with God. Isaiah even suggested to Hezekiah that Judea should completely throw off the

yoke of Assyria which it had suffered since King Ahaz' unfortunate reign by having to pay regular tribute (money) in recognition of Assyrian supremacy. Hezekiah's faith and confidence in God's help was so great that he did not doubt the Isaiah's word that even Assyria, the greatest and mightiest military power in the known world, would be unable to punish Judea for their defiance and independence; and he made definite plans to stop the tribute payments, and to prepare his little nation against a certain and immanent attack from the forces of Assyria.

Archeological Evidence: The royal seal of Hezekiah, king of Judah, was discovered in the Ophel excavations under the direction of renowned archaeologist Eilat Mazar.

For the first time, the royal seal of King Hezekiah in the Bible was found in an archaeological excavation. The stamped clay seal, also known as a bulla, was discovered in the Ophel excavations led by Dr. Eilat Mazar at the foot of the southern wall of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The discovery was announced in a press release by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Institute of Archaeology, under whose auspices the excavations were conducted.

The bulla, which measures just over a centimeter in diameter, bears a seal impression depicting a two-winged sun disk flanked by ankh symbols and containing a Hebrew inscription that reads "Belonging to Hezekiah, (son of) Ahaz, king of Judah."

Please Watch: <https://youtu.be/j4n-QxzyRW>

Why this is Important

This Historical and Archeological context is important to modern Christians because of the evidential connection to past - present - future. The connection to the future becomes relevant because of Isaiah's prophetic words revealing the Messiah (Jesus Christ) to not only the Jews, but to all Non-Jewish people for all times and all places. Listen to his description...

Isaiah 53

Who has believed what they heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have

turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

9.30.18

Isaiah's Authorship and Authenticity

There are many distinct and clear passages of the Old Testament scripture written before the time of Christ that would indicate and precede His First Advent: **God the Creator taking on the human nature to die for our sins, then conquer death that we might live in Him.** One of the most important of those "God-breathed" or "Spirit-inspired" Old Testament scriptures is the book of Isaiah, which, as we know has many significant and miraculous prophecies about the coming Messiah. A quick and almost alarming example of this would be Isaiah 9:6–7.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The prophet Isaiah's name itself, in Hebrew 'Yeshayahu, means "salvation of YHWH" or "YHWH saves". Ancient translator Jerome (342–420A.D.), who translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin, said in his preface to his commentary on Isaiah:

"He was more of an Evangelist than a Prophet, because he described all of the Mysteries of the Church of Christ so vividly that you would assume he was not prophesying about the future, but rather was composing a history of past events."

I believe it is precisely because the book of Isaiah has such accurate predictions about the coming Messiah (Jesus) that liberal theologians and secular biblical critics have attacked its authenticity. It's pretty obvious that predicting the future is naturally impossible—but for those with a true hatred of Christ's truth and the Bible it is clearly even more impossible. Why? The main reason for this impossibility is rooted in the cynical disbelief of the past. How can one expect to have spiritual insight or perception of a future hope and glorious tomorrow with such hateful and disbelieving dogma against the biblical miracles and divinely supernatural events of the past? There is no insight or perception of the future for those who refuse to believe that a God who created time itself would also know and control the future. In recent years the popular secular headlines claiming that scholars have proven that the book of Isaiah is not only prophetically incorrect, but also had been written by not one, but likely several authors and had been radically changed.

How Many Authors?

The main argument for multiple authors of Isaiah has always been a presumption that true predictive prophecy is impossible, concluding it

must have been written after the events it claims to predict. Here is the deconstruct argument in a nutshell...

Liberal scholars have taught that chapters 1–39 were written by the real Isaiah 730 BC'ish, but later chapters were written by a 'Second Isaiah' centuries later, around 545–500 BC. This puts the writing after the Babylonian Captivity which was foretold by the early writing. Some even propose a 'Third Isaiah' for chapters 56–66, allegedly written sometime between 525–475 BC.

The first section: Chapters 1-39, comes from the Assyrian period and is directly associated with the ministry of Isaiah of Jerusalem from 740 to 700 BC. That does not mean that all material within those chapters dates from that period, however, since there are clearly some later additions to this collection from the Babylonian era. But it does establish Isaiah of Jerusalem as the founder of the Isaiah traditions.

The second section: Chapters 40-55, comes from the late exilic period as the empire of Babylon was coming to an end and the Persian Empire was emerging as the new ruler of the Middle East. If we take the edict of Cyrus in 538 as a benchmark for this era, this section of the book dates to about 540-539 BC.

The third section: Chapters 56-66, reflects the crisis of faith precipitated by unfulfilled or delayed prophecy, a situation that we know from Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi from between 520 and 450 BC. If we use the time

of Haggai around 520 as the benchmark for this era, this third section of Isaiah probably comes from the period 515-500, with the possibility that it may extend as late as 450.

Hmmm... one book, several authors. Could this be true? On the surface there are some compelling possibilities. But then there is this! Isaiah chapter 6, (which NO-ONE doubts comes from the earliest part of the book) records a revelation made by God to Isaiah at the beginning of his prophetic ministry (739 BC). After he heard God's call and had been commissioned to preach to a people who would only harden their hearts against the truth, he asked the Lord a difficult question that had a troubling answer.

Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, and the Lord removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

This is a clear prediction of the total devastation and depopulation of Judah by the hand and command of Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC. The point is that it takes place over 150 years after Isaiah (the original) wrote about it.

If this does not destroy the basic premise of the entire multi-authored Isaiah theory, it should at least bring us back to the realization and point in our faith that once again believes in the supernatural and prophetic

possibilities of an all-knowing and all-powerful God. This gets us to move off the place which automatically assumes that it would be impossible for an eighth-century Hebrew prophet to foretell or even foreknow the events of 587 and 539–537 BC (the Fall of Babylon and the return of the first settlers to Jerusalem). You could assume that about a Godless, faithless, and disobedient prophet - but not Isaiah, he was none of those things

The New Testament authors, as well as Christ Himself, pretty clearly believed that Isaiah was a single author in unified voice, which should be helpful for any professing Christian wanting to exercise faith and trust in the authorship and authenticity God's word from the prophet.

One - Matthew 12:17–18 quotes Isaiah 42:1 as “that which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet.”

Two - Matthew 3:3 quotes Isaiah 40:3 as “spoken by the prophet Isaiah.”

Three - Luke 3:4 quotes Isaiah 40:3–5 as “in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet.”

Four - Acts 8:28 reports that the Ethiopian eunuch was “reading Isaiah the prophet,” specifically Isaiah 53:7–8. He then inquired of Philip, “Of whom is the prophet speaking, of himself or of some other man?”

Five - In John 12:38–41 we find two quotations from Isaiah: Isaiah 53:1 (in John v. 38) and Isaiah 6:9–10 (in John v. 40). Then in Verse 41 John

affirms concerning these two verses: **“These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.”** This would imply that the inspired apostle believed that both Isaiah 6 and Isaiah 53 were written by one writer with one voice - Isaiah.

The Manuscript Evidence... Snap!

In the wing of the Israel Museum known as "Shrine of the Book" within the city of Jerusalem, there is housed an internationally renowned display - The Dead Sea Scrolls. The Scrolls were discovered 1947–56 in eleven different caves around Qumran. Radiocarbon and handwriting tests put the Scrolls mostly in the 1st and 2nd centuries B.C. One of the best displays in the museum is the scroll of Isaiah, in its entirety. As with many museums, there is a secular bias, but what is most revealing in this case is that they had to admit that even well before the time of Christ, readers of the book and ancient scholars clearly treated Scroll as a single and unified-authored manuscript, and not as multi-authored work. So they had to explain away why the earliest textual evidence didn't fit the multi-authored-Isaiah narrative.

This scroll also provided an opportunity to test the accuracy of copying over the centuries. Analysis showed that the Dead Sea Scrolls are about 1000 years older than the earliest Masoretic (authoritative Hebrew and Aramaic) manuscripts, yet they are word-for-word identical for over 95%

of the text. A great example would be from chapter 53 of Isaiah, the prophecy of Jesus' atoning death and resurrection. Of the 166 words, only 17 letters are different. Ten are spelling variants, and four more are stylistic changes. The remaining three letters spell the word 'light' in Isaiah 53:11, and may make more sense that way, although it doesn't greatly affect the meaning of the passage. Once again, we can find scientific evidence to support our faith and belief and not the narrative of the world's faithlessness and doubt.

The Big Finale

Who cares? In reality, I don't care if 20 authors wrote Isaiah - that would even be a greater miracle - that 20 theologians could agree on anything long enough to write in unison and speak with one voice. I have no problems expanding my faith to accept the divine and supernatural possibilities of the singular prophetic voice of Isaiah. If I can't then I need to reject Christianity and stop following Christ. In reality, there is nothing in the entire book of Isaiah that contradicts the word and message of God. The message of the Messiah and Savior Jesus Christ is delivered to us in unity as one prophetic voice - making Isaiah more relevant today than it was even 2500 years ago. Here is what we know about the authorship and authenticity of Isaiah. We now know that Isaiah was written before Christ, and so it makes sense that any of the Messianic prophecies that Christians appeal and aspire to could not have been added to the text later.

Anyone is free to claim that the biblical text of Isaiah was originally a sandal repair manual if they want to, but the burden of proof is on them to prove their theory by producing the ancient manual. Until that time the actual evidence for believers in God and followers of Christ from all-times and all-places remains on the side that Isaiah was the original author of the whole thing, and the whole thing has survived virtually unchanged for at least 2500 years. And, frankly, that is how it should be. A few copying errors do not change the message of the book or any of its essential doctrines or Messianic prophecies. Isaiah is a remarkable book that no human on his own could have written: it has knowledge of future events in its own land, as well as the foretelling of the coming Messiah - Jesus Christ. For this reason, and this reason alone its authenticity has been attacked furiously by critics. The claims of multiple authorship make no sense of the internal evidence, the available manuscript evidence, and the testimony of Christ and the Holy Spirit inspired authors of the New Testament.

Of course there have been sensationalist headlines asserting that the Bible has been radically altered throughout its history - why wouldn't there be? Is this really news or is it just more F__ news?

10.14.18

Messianic Prophecies and Timelines Chapter 7:14-16

The Prophecy - Isaiah 7:14-16

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The young maiden (virgin) will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.

The Fulfillment - Matthew 1:18-23

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not

want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means God with us)."

Answering Critics

Question: Critics will question - "Why do Christians think that Isaiah 7:14 was a prophecy about the future and not something that only involved Ahaz during his lifetime? Doesn't Isaiah 7:14 only concern Isaiah and Ahaz? They will argue that verse 10-11, plainly says that the sign is to Ahaz, and verse 14 says the Lord himself shall give you (Ahaz) a sign. It's all addressed from Isaiah to Ahaz - not one thing is addressed to the future. There is no prophetic language such as the time will come when such and such happens. The greatest portion of this viewpoint comes from Orthodox Judaism (not surprisingly). That Isaiah 7:14 was direct and singularly attached to Isaiah, Ahaz, and the people of Judah 2700 years ago fits the narrative of most orthodox Jews - Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah, and they did not kill him 2000 years ago.

Response: In reality, there are two issues - a nation and a creation. **One** - The prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 indeed is directed at Ahaz, and had to be fulfilled during his lifetime for his (God's) people. This fulfillment is related directly to the sins and salvation of a single nation - ancient Judah. **Two** - It was also directed at the house and the lineage of David - and beyond. And could also be fulfilled long after the time of Ahaz, in fact, 700 or so years after. This fulfillment is related directly to the sins and salvation of all creation - to all who believe. Reading the scripture in the complete prophetic context of Isaiah 7 supports the view that the latter is true, that the Christian view of this prophecy is also correct.

In Isaiah 7:13, the prophet Isaiah specifically turns his attention from King Ahaz, who is a member of the house of David, and fires off a warning shot to the entire house of David.

Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also?"

Then, speaking to the same audience in verse 14, Isaiah directs them to a coming sign from God.

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

In chapter 7 the kings of Israel (Northern Kingdom) and Syria formed an alliance and attacked Jerusalem. Isaiah assured Ahaz that God would not

allow this unholy alliance of terror to prevail. Although Ahaz would never ask God for a sign, God true to His promise proclaimed one for his people through the prophet Isaiah. The greatest sign of all.

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken."

Significant Relevance

The "sign" that God gave to Ahaz has a two-fold function. The first has to do with a son who will be born to a virgin, whose name will be Immanuel, and who will eat "curds and honey," at the time these two kings will be disposed of. From verse 22 we know that "curds and honey" in that day was known as the food of prosperity and abundance, not of adversity. Had the siege been successful, the people of Jerusalem would have been starving. The child's birth may not have been supernatural, since the term "virgin" can also mean simply "maiden." It is therefore capable of at least two fulfillments - one for Ahaz's Judah, and the second for future generations of all peoples, all races, all colors, and all times. In the first "sign" the boy seems to have been naturally born, but nevertheless a sign to the king, not so much in his birth, but in the food which he ate at the time the two kings were dispatched.

But within this supernatural word of Isaiah was an even greater "sign." A sign in the making, a sign of future hope and deliverance, a sign yet to come. As we see now this prophecy through a "Back to the Future" lens the ultimate fulfillment comes from a literal virgin who (after an angelic visitation and message) would supernaturally conceive and bear a son, and this son would be the evidence of God's final and full deliverance of all of His people (not just Jews) once and for all. Only in the light of the miraculous birth of Immanuel - the Messiah would this "sign" be understood for what it truly was, thanks to Matthew's account (1:23).

10.21.18 – 10.28.18

**The Modern Relevance of an Ancient Voice
Messianic Prophecies and Timelines**

Chapter 9:1-7

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his

shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

**For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.
For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government
shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful
Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

**Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to
uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth
and forevermore.**

Isaiah declares hope when he declares that the darkness of judgment would not cover the land forever. Focusing on the northern regions of Israel, Isaiah described a time when God would reverse the humiliating judgment he had poured out on the ancient tribal regions of Zebulun and Naphtali (verse 1). In 734 B.C. - 732 B.C., Assyria annexed most of Israel's territory and reduced Samaria to a puppet state, governed by a ruler handpicked by the Assyrians. The Assyrians organized the annexed areas into the three provinces mentioned in verse 1: Megiddo - Galilee of the Gentiles, Dor - the way of the sea, and Gilead - the region along and beyond the Jordan. Isaiah is proclaiming that the light of God's deliverance would overcome the darkness of Israel's rebellion and Assyria's rule in this entire region. A conquering Davidic king (9:7 and

11:1,10) would deliver Israel from their oppressive enemies, just as Gideon of old had shattered the cruel Midianites (Judges 7).

Expository Context of 9:1-5

Peace and hope will come with the arrival of a Messiah - Savior - King.

Isaiah declares that in contrast to his present age of war, gloom, and despair, there is coming an age when peace will reign universally. It will begin with the coming of the Messiah, the promised future king. So we call that period the Messianic Age. Isaiah miraculously details how it will unfold.

9:1-2 A Miraculous Change in Circumstances Will End the Peoples Despair and Hopelessness.

The passage begins with the announcement of the change: there will be no more gloom for those in anguish; in the past the LORD humbled the northern lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee. Why? That is where the Messiah will first appear—Galilee of the Gentiles, a place looked down on for so long as less spiritual, less pure than Judea.

The explanation of this exaltation is found in verse 2. Those who walk in darkness have seen a great light, on those in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. The language is poetic: darkness signifies

adversity, despair, gloom and evil, and the light signifies prosperity, peace, and joy. The language is used elsewhere of the Messianic Age—Malachi says that the “sun of righteousness will rise with healing in his wings” (4:2). So the people in the north who have suffered so much have the prospect of a wonderful new beginning.

[note] Isaiah's verbs are in the past tense—he writes as if it has already happened. That is prophetic language. The prophet was a “seer” or visionary. He received divine revelation and recorded what he saw. As far as he was concerned, if it had been shown to him from God, it was as good as done, so he spoke as it were. It was certain, even though it had not yet been lived out in history.

So “light” will shine on people who were walking in “darkness.” The initial fulfillment of this prophecy is beyond doubt. Matthew quotes this text in conjunction with the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. He is the true light of the world that lights every person. He brings to a darkened world grace and truth, and the sure promise of peace. When He began to minister in Galilee with His teachings and His miracles, He demonstrated that He was indeed this Messiah. His proclamation of the kingdom through salvation is what ends the despair, for believers in Him are not lost in gloom and despair, for they know that what He promised will come to pass at His second coming.

9:3 The Messiah Brings Joy and Prosperity

The prophet turns to address the LORD directly. His words explain what it means that light will dispel the darkness—joy and prosperity will follow. The prophet gives no clue as to how soon this would happen. But we who have the full revelation of God know that Jesus made it clear that he was the Messiah, and that the age of peace and righteousness was yet future.

The joy described here is extravagant. It is the kind of joy that comes at the harvest, or at the dividing of the plunder. Harvest was a regular time of joy in Israel; after a long time of labor in the fields the people would gather to eat and drink and celebrate. The Bible often uses the analogy of the harvest to describe the coming of the LORD (see Matthew 3:12 for the harvest and winnowing imagery). It is a thanksgiving celebration for the completion of the harvest.

Dividing the spoils, the other image here, is a bit more direct since wars will lead up to the end of the age. The image is about the victors after the battle is over, dividing up the rightful possessions and wealth of the conquered enemy. Such would be an almost delirious celebration of triumph that would usher in an age of peace.

9:4-5 Joy Will Come Through the Ending of War

The imagery of joy at the division of the enemy's goods leads directly into the explanation: the prophet foresees the time when the LORD will break the oppression of the enemies. He draws the analogy with the time of

Israel's victory over Midian through Gideon by the power of the LORD. So will it again be.

But this victory will be greater. Verse 5 says that the instruments of war will be destroyed. This will be no break in the action, no temporary peace treaty. War will end. Isaiah goes on, "They will beat their swords into plowshares," meaning, military weapons will not be needed in a time of lasting peace.

How can this happen, given the world situation as we know it? The answer to this question is found in the second half of the oracle which describes the nature of the Messiah who will bring in the reign of peace and righteousness. If there is such peace and that peace will come, someone must have the ability to produce and maintain it.

9:6-7 Peace Will Finally Come With the Righteous Reign of the Messiah

Isaiah moves on to introduce the One (only one) who will transform the gloom and despair of war into the joy and peace of a time of righteousness – the Messiah. The first part of his prophecy is very familiar to Christians: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders." Isaiah is very precise here, as we now know. A child will be born into the family of David, and that there was a birth in Bethlehem is beyond question; but the Messiah will also be a Son that is given, and that Jesus did not come into existence in Bethlehem is clear from the Bible.

According to the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:14), the term "son" is a title for the king. The same is true in the vision of Daniel where the expression "Son of Man" is used (7:9-14). Daniel's vision shows this glorious king in the presence of the Almighty, the Ancient of Days, and that he would be given the kingdom of peace. Isaiah announces that the child to be born will be this Son given. This idea is then clarified by Paul: "In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman ..." (Galatians 4:4).

The New Testament bears witness that Jesus is this Son who came into the world. In fact, Jesus Himself set about to prove His origin was in heaven, not in Bethlehem. When He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, he prayed and included these words in His prayer: "that they might know that You sent Me" (John 11:42). By this He meant that He was from above, and they were from below. Or, in debating with the religious leaders Jesus asked how David could call his descendant his "Lord," clearly showing that the "Son of David," the Messiah, was greater than David (Mark 12:35,36, regarding Psalm 110). And of course, to the woman at the well Jesus clearly revealed Himself: she said, "When the Messiah comes, He will declare all things to us." Jesus said, "I that speak to you am He" (John 4:25, 26).

It is clear, then, that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, the Christ, the child born into the house of David, the Son given by God to be the long expected King. The first advent of Jesus established His identity; it did not begin His reign, however, for He has yet to put down all enemies.

The prophecy that “the government will be upon His shoulder” will come to complete reality at His second coming—an aspect of the Messianic prophecies that the prophets did not see (1 Peter 1:10, 11). The reference to the shoulder is probably a reference to the wearing of an insignia of office on the shoulder (see Isaiah 22:22). There will be a time when this Son will rule as king.

We may say that Jesus now reigns above, and that is certainly true. But Isaiah envisions a time of universal peace and righteousness in this world. That has not happened yet. Hebrews chapter 1 says that this exaltation will be complete when the Father again brings His firstborn into the world. So Isaiah does not know when all these things will take place; only that they will happen because the Word of the LORD has declared it.

The nature of the Messiah is now portrayed in the listing of His throne names. It must be noted that these are not names in the sense that we have names. These are character descriptions. They are intended to give the nature or the significance of the person named. We use the word “name” at times in this way. We may say, “She made a name for herself,” that is, a reputation. The names in this section describe the nature of the glorious king.

In the ancient Near East kings were in the habit of taking throne names when they ascended the throne. They took titles and added epithets to their names. Usually the epithets they chose were too generous for mere

mortals. For example, in the Middle Kingdom of Egypt the rulers took five titles when crowned – each name referring to some god, some land, some aspiration they had for their administration. One king who was crowned heard the priest say, “Let the great names of the good god and his titles be made like those of the gods. So in these epithets the King would be extolled as the possessor of might, wisdom, wonders, truth, and all life. These are, to be sure, rather ambitious for mere mortals.

There is evidence of such titling in Israel, especially in cases where God bestowed names on new kings. Psalm 2, the coronation psalm, says, “You are my Son, this day I have begotten you.” So on the day the king ascended the throne he was declared to be the Son, that is, God’s anointed King. So too in 2 Samuel 23:1 do we find a proliferation of names for David: “David, the son of Jesse, the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel’s singer of songs.”

But there is nothing biblically to compare with the type of names found in Isaiah 9. Isaiah proclaimed the coming Messiah the names: **Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace** as the permanent titles; wonderful, mighty, everlasting, and peace are the variable ones. Isaiah is affirming that the one who is coming will not merely have great titles, but will in reality be what those titles claim. What had been a hope, a wild dream, or monarchs for ages will surely become a reality someday. With a king such as this, peace is assured. There is no hope in some pagan Egyptian king who made great claims; the only hope

is in the Word of the LORD that promised Immanuel - God with Us. Let's take a look at these four prophetic titles.

Wonderful Counselor

The first words used to describe this Son have usually been separated in the English Bibles to form two epithets. But Isaiah himself joins these two terms together in Isaiah 28:29. So probably, as with the other titles, the one word serves to qualify the other—he is a wonder of a counselor.

“Wonderful” is a word that primarily describes the LORD or extraordinary or supernatural things in the Scriptures; it means “extraordinary, surpassing, marvelous, wonderful.” It was not used in a trivial sense, as we often use the English word “wonderful.” For example, in Genesis 18 the LORD announced the birth of Isaac to the aging Abraham and Sarah. When Sarah laughed in her heart, the LORD, knowing she laughed, said, “Is anything too hard for the LORD?” “Hard” is our word—Is anything too marvelous, wonderful, extraordinary, for the LORD? Or again, David, meditating on the knowledge of the LORD, came to realize that the LORD knows everything about him, his thoughts, his intentions, even the words he is trying to say, all of it (Psalms 139:1-6). He marvels, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me!” Or again, when the Angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah, Manoah inquired, “What is your name?” To this the visitor responded, “Why do you ask my name, seeing that it is Wonderful?” Then, when the flame on the altar blazed up, the Wonderful Angel ascended to heaven.

To describe the king with this Hebrew word “wonderful” is to ascribe to him extraordinary, normally supernatural abilities. Jesus, by His mighty words, showed Himself to be wonderful in this sense. In John 11:25 he said, “I am the resurrection and the Life; whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies.” Then, to authenticate His claims He raised Lazarus from the dead. That is extraordinary. It is marvelously surpassing. It is wonderful. We would have to say with Nicodemus that no man can do these things apart from God. Jesus has the words of life because He has power over life and death. What a King He shall be!

The second word in the title is “**Counselor.**” The word means “one who plans.” It means he has the wisdom to rule. Isaiah 11:2 will explain that this king, this Immanuel, has the Spirit of Counsel, that is, his wisdom to rule is God-given (compare Solomon’s wisdom). The word “king” as well as other related terms are related to the idea of decision-making. Kings make decisions; they give counsel. At times they must surround themselves with counselors to make the right decisions. But this king will be a wonder of a counselor.

Jesus’ teachings and judgments showed that He was a great counsellor. His insight was supernatural—He knew what was in people. In John 1:48-51 He rightly analyzed Nathanael; He said, “I saw you while you were under the fig tree before Philip called you.” To which Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel.” He recognized the Wonderful Counselor when He appeared. So too did the woman at the well in John 4. She said, “Come and see a man who told me everything I

ever did. Is not this the Christ?" Or again, when the Jews sent men to bring Jesus bound hand and foot to them, they returned empty-handed. Their reason? "No man ever spoke like this man" (John 7:26). This work of our Lord continues today, for when He went away He promised to send another counselor (John 14:16), the Holy Spirit, who would continue to counsel by His Word, to convict, to teach, and to transform people.

What made Jesus such a wonderful counselor? He knew what was in man (John 2:25). He had that wonderful knowledge of which David spoke. And it continues. What is it in the seven letters to the churches in Revelation that is His constant theme? Jesus says, "I know your works." That needs very little explanation; it is painfully clear.

Mighty God

Not only was Messiah to be wonderful in counsel, he was to be the image of God as no other was. The term "God" can be used of kings and judges in the Old Testament. But Isaiah does not use it that way, unless that is the sole meaning here. Every other time Isaiah uses the term "God" ('el) he means deity. In fact, he has just announced in chapters 7 and 8 that this king would be known as 'Immanu-'el, "God with us." To say "a king is with us" would be of little effect. But to say that a king is coming whose power will display that God is with the people—that is a sign.

There is another passage that uses "mighty" and "God" together to describe Messiah. Psalm 45:3 says, "Gird your sword, O Mighty One ...

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." So the King would be known as the powerful one, the mighty God.

This epithet, no matter how translated, would be too generous for a mere mortal. It actually brings the ideology of divine kingship into Jerusalem and applies it to some future king. But Jesus claimed such for Himself as well. He claimed to be divine. According to John 8:58 He identified Himself as the great I AM of the Old Testament, the sovereign Lord God of Israel. In Matthew 24:30 he announced, "All power is given to me." "I AM"—"all power." In sum, Jesus is the Mighty God.

The apostles bear witness to this. John declares He is God in the flesh, the agent of creation (John 1:1-3). And Paul reminds us of His deity and His power in Ephesians 1:18-21. What might have seemed to Isaiah's audience to be an honorific title, or a description of one who would rule as God's vice-regent, became historically true and literal in Jesus Christ, for the mighty God came in the flesh.

Everlasting Father

The third title in many ways is the most striking. It is literally "father of perpetuity," that is, one who will be perpetually the father. In Canaanite religion the high god is called "father of years," and this title in Hebrew seems to carry a similar force. It describes one who produces, directs, and is lord over the ages.

The title might be taken to mean that this wonder king has the durability to rule. But the use of the terms in the Old Testament suggests another view. The Messiah—the King—was to be known as the “Son,” not the Father, according to the Davidic Covenant. The covenant said that God would be to the king a father, and the king would be to Him a son (2 Sam. 7:14). But here in Isaiah the Son is called the Father. The point in Isaiah is that the sovereign LORD who had always enthroned the Davidic kings would come and rule as the Messiah.

This seeming confusion of “persons” shows up in a couple of other prophecies. In Isaiah 48:15-16 the LORD God Almighty is speaking and says, “I, even I, have spoken; Yes, I have called him, I have brought him, and his way will prosper. Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there. And now the LORD God and His Spirit have sent Me.” The same phenomenon of the LORD being both the sovereign who sends Messiah and Messiah who is sent is found in Malachi 3:1-5.

Now all this seems a bit confusing, but the statements of Jesus confirm the fact that the “Son” who is given is also known as the Father. Jesus said, “I am not of this world” (John 8:23), “I came in My Father’s name” (John 5:43), and finally, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). So Jesus is the expressed image of the Father, the Sovereign king-maker. By taking this title, Everlasting Father, the Messiah is to be known as the One who is the sovereign Lord over the ever changing years—he produces and directs

eternity. Such a name belongs to a god, not just any divine creature or spiritual being, but to the God.

Prince of Peace

This last title means that the Messiah will be one who ensures for his people the blessings of peace. He will be a prince who brings peace. The word “peace” is used as an epithet for the LORD as well as the King. In Judges 6:24 because of the greeting of “peace” from the Angel of the LORD the place was called “The LORD is peace.” Whenever the LORD visited his people, whether by the Angel of the LORD or by His promised Messiah, it was to announce or promise peace to the world (Isa. 11:6-9; Ps. 72:3, 7).

But the Hebrew concept of “peace” is more than the absence of war. To Isaiah, peace is a condition in which all things follow their destiny undisturbed. Elsewhere the prophet will talk of the lion lying down with the lamb, and children playing at the viper’s nest. This can only occur, of course, when major changes in nature are made. Therefore Isaiah’s vision of the Messianic Age will culminate in the prophecy of a new heaven and a new earth—there will be a whole new creation!

It is at this point that we find a little difficulty in the New Testament. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, no doubt; but His teachings on peace seem to be contradictory. He said, “Come unto me all you who labor ... and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). He also said, “Peace I give you”—not as

the world gives (John 14:27; 16:33). The peace that Jesus brings is a peace that passes all understanding.

But Jesus also said, "I came not to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34); "In this life you shall have trouble and persecution" (John 16:33). So Jesus did not hold out the immediate prospect of Isaiah's peace to His disciples. He said that He was sending them among wolves, that brother would rise against brother, and that people would hate them and drag them before magistrates. How would, how were, they to respond?

The simple and obvious conclusion is that Jesus brought peace with God through redemption by His death and resurrection, and will eventually bring total peace through His exalted reign over all the earth. His Peace is not our peace - His is eternal (forever) ours is temporal (a minute). Jesus said that the kingdom was within us, and that it would also come with lightning flashes in the heavens (Luke 17:20-25). So we yet await the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophetic vision of peace in this divided and hostile world.

Conclusion

The central idea of Isaiah's oracle is as follows: Complete and lasting peace comes with the righteous reign of the divine Messiah. The prophet anticipates that the present gloom at the prospect of war will be replaced by the joy of peace. That peace can only be accomplished through a King who is a Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and

the Prince of Peace. Righteousness and peace is impossible without Him; nothing is impossible for Him.

The words of the prophet held out hope for his generation. God was not abandoning His people to invasion and disaster, but was promising that in spite of the prospect of war there was a glorious future ahead. And on the eve of the birth of Jesus the nation also felt the oppression of world conflict and the despair it brings. Into that world Jesus came, clearly claiming to be the Messiah of Israel, this Wonder King. But His first coming was to lay the foundation of the glory that would follow, that is, His death on the cross would reconcile people to God, bringing them into eternal peace with God through the forgiveness of sins. And so now as we look forward to His coming again, the words of Isaiah hold out hope for us too. Wars and conflicts abound; despair and depression accompany the fear of danger and aggression. But the Word of God is clear: there is coming a time of complete and lasting peace with the coming of Messiah. There is hope. We who know the LORD by faith need not despair as those without hope.

But what then are we to do while we wait for this King? First, it is our task to carry on the ministry that Isaiah had, to announce to the world the only hope, Jesus the Messiah. Our primary concern is that people find eternal peace with God. We are the ambassadors for this King, calling others to be reconciled with God. And what goes along with this? Our lives must be purified from sin so that we may present to others the hope of righteousness. Our efforts must be tireless to declare to the world that the

hope of peace rests with Jesus Christ and none other. And our promotion of causes of peace and righteousness must be consistent with our message, in our families, our communities and our world.

But secondly, this passage also instructs us about the resources available to us even now from our King. We know that Jesus is the Wonderful Counsellor, so we may obtain instruction and guidance for our lives from Him and in His Word. He is the Mighty God, for all power is given to Him, so we may trust Him to accomplish great things in and through us. He is the Everlasting Father, so we may take comfort in the stability that knowing our sovereign Lord reigns brings. And, He is our Prince of Peace, so we may rest in Him, knowing that because of Jesus Christ all is well between us and God. In short, these descriptions of our Lord Jesus Christ are calls to greater prayer, greater confidence, and greater service.

Close

John 8:12

1 Peter 2:9

11.11.18

The Modern Relevance of an Ancient Voice

Messianic Prophecies and Timelines

Chapter 11:1-10

The Prophecy

Isaiah 11:1-10

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD – and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.

The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's

nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

Stumped

Isaiah 11:1

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

Why the stump of Jesse? By the time that Jesus comes on the scene, we're looking at around 600 years that the Davidic line has laid dormant. Jesse, being David's father, was a man of humble descent – there is an allusion to the nature of the “pomp” and “circumstance” (or lack thereof) that would accompany the Messiah.

Think on your life for a moment. Think about the crucial times and decisions that accompany any life. Sometimes these events or actions are surrounded in parade, they are given the due attention warranted a life altering scenario. However, how many times in life are we only recognizant of the genesis of course alteration or correction that leads to radical change, discovery, knowledge, and/or understanding after the fact?

It is in retrospect that we can come to an understanding of what events truly alter our lives most significantly – hindsight is 20/20.

Bonus: Typically in my life, something has to be taken away, something needs to die and be mourned, prior to something new being given life.

Double Bonus: Jesse is the son of Obed, son of Ruth and Boaz. Ruth, a Moabite, whose life was in shambles and seemingly near ruin, won the love of Boaz through her kindness – from humble beginnings to navigating loss and death to fulfilling prophecy and continuing the bloodline of Jesus. She is named along with Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, and Mary as the only women in the genealogy Jesus.

Testing the Spirits

Isaiah 11:2-3

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD – and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

- The Spirit of the Lord

ruach: breath, wind, spirit

Yhvh: the proper name of the God of Israel

Literally the “Spirit of Creation” will rest on him. It is apparent through his life, through his words, his teachings, and his actions that the Spirit of the LORD was constantly with Jesus. He offered hope. He offered peace. He offered insight and direction. He offered meaning. He offered forgiveness, unearned. He still freely offers The Spirit of the LORD today.

- The Spirit of Wisdom and of Understanding

chokmah: wisdom

wisdom in administration

binah: an understanding (the object of knowledge)

Wisdom in administration – seems like if we took out the “in” and pushed those two words together, we’d most likely have an oxymoron on our hands. How foolish we truly are. We speak, we spew – we extrapolate our thoughts through our rhetoric of choice. Often times, if not most, we don't know too much about what we are saying. And if we do happen to know a lot, that knowledge is typically attained from a frantic Google search.

Jesus didn't play politics. “Render unto Caesar” is the famous tagline.

Bottom line – Jesus came for the downtrodden and the lost. He came for the unrepentant and unforgiven. He came to the shamed, the broken, the barely surviving. Sometimes he offered natural solutions – feeding the naked, healing the sick – others times he offered only Spiritual nourishment. His Wisdom in administration is for this life, but also for the life unseen. Understanding this changes everything. It changes your ability to make knee-jerk reactions and judgments about others. It should

allow for individuals (you and me) to take a step back, be slow to speak, to contemplate situations and people – and to see Love as opposed to enemies to destroy or battle.

- The Spirit of Counsel and Power

etsah: counsel, advice

geburah: strength, might, valour of warriors

What would you pay for good advice? People pay a pretty penny for advice from doctors, lawyers, counselors, therapists and psychologists, etc. Who do you trust advice from? Your spouse, your family, your closest friends? Often times we seek our advice and counsel from some pretty silly places. That, or we seek out advice that will confirm our inner narrative, play to our narcissism, or embrace our lack of wanting to be challenged. Counsel should be good and lead to good things for you and for others. It should carry weight – I'm talking Spirit power weight. Isaiah refers to the Messiah in this prophecy as having the Spirit of the "might and valour of warriors." That sounds epic. However, this is referring not only to the strength to overthrow nations and armies, it is the might to overthrow the forces of darkness that plague our very souls.

- The Spirit of Knowledge and the Fear of the LORD

daath: knowledge (of God)

yirah: a fear

Proverbs 1:7

**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.**

Bonus: This passage is behind the term the sevenfold Spirit of God used in Revelation 1:4, 3:1, 4:5 and 5:6. It isn't that there are seven different spirits of God, rather the Spirit of the LORD has these characteristics, and He has them all in fullness and perfection.

The seven-branched lampstand that held the oil lamps for the tabernacle is also an illustration of the seven aspects of the Holy Spirit. This candlestick had one stem in the center from which protruded three branches to the right and three to the left. Similarly, in this text, three pairs of the names of the Spirit are grouped around the central stem.

These seven characteristics describe the nature of the Spirit of the LORD. They also describe the nature of Jesus. There is no difference between the nature of Jesus and the nature of the Holy Spirit. When we see Jesus, we see the Father. When we see the Spirit of the LORD at work, it should look like the ministry and the nature of Jesus.

Double Bonus: It is in the verses themselves – the fact that we hope and long for something that is opposite of what is in reality presented to us. We want the Spirit of the Lord – **the Spirit of wisdom and of**

understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD – but we don't want the humble beginnings.

We want to be involved, but we don't want to be widows and prostitutes.

Blinded by the Injustice

Isaiah 11:3-4

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

- But with Righteousness he will judge... With Justice he will give decisions...

tsedeq: rightness, righteousness

shaphat: to judge, govern

Imagine a world where everything was just. What would it look like or how would it differ from what we are currently facing? I propose this – we already live life in a just world. Jesus came in judgment – that's a difficult concept for some to grasp. However, this is crucial to the Gospel. Jesus' judgement or governance on humanity is done so through the righteousness of God, the LORD, of Yaweh. Jesus chooses God, and in so doing, God works and moves and breathes and lives through Him – and by proxy, judgement is the natural outcome of facing the righteousness of God. There is no room for he-said, she-said. It is past the appearance of

things and cuts to the heart of the Truth beyond the temporal. In this righteousness, we find our justice.

I Never Leave Home Without My Sword

Isaiah 11:4

He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

- The Word of God

nakah: to smite

shebet: rod, staff, club, scepter, tribe

peh: mouth

ruach: breath, wind, spirit

saphah: lip, speech, edge

muth: to die

rasha: wicked, criminal (to God and/or His people)

The power of God's Word is immeasurable. It is not measured in the 66 books of the Bible you hold in your hand or your phone. It is not measured by the countless commentaries, theologians, philosophers, churches, denominations, or religions the world over. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Light shined forth out of the darkness. God spoke. Nah, God speaks.

Bonus: With the rod of his mouth; with his word, which is his sceptre, and the rod of his power, Psalm 110:2, which is sharper than a sword, Hebrews 4:12; by the preaching whereof he subdued the world to himself, and will destroy his enemies, 2 Thessalonians 2:8. This he adds, further to declare the nature of Christ's kingdom, that it is not of this world, and that his sceptre and arms are not carnal, but spiritual, as it is said, 2 Corinthians 10:4.

The Fulfillment

Romans 5:12

And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope."

Revelations 21:1-7

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" He who was seated on the throne said, "I am

making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

Content and Context

In chapter eleven, Isaiah's prophetic word reveals once again the Messiah, descended from lineage of King David. **What is the content of what Isaiah reveals in this passage?** The Messiah will be wise, understanding and righteous. He will be driven to do the will of the Father God who sent Him, and will have supernatural powers of perception. His judgement will be just, not exploiting the poor as had been done by the leaders of Isaiah's generation. The Messiah will destroy evil with His words of truth.

People who seek goodness and righteousness will surround the Messiah. The strong will dwell in peace with the weak, rather than oppressing them. They are symbolized by the wolf and the lamb living together; there are those who take this literally rather than allegorically. There are many such metaphors in this chapter: the cow and the bear, the lion eating straw, children not fearing snakes, etc. The land will be filled with the wisdom of Torah knowledge.

When the Messiah is established, the nations will look only to Him for direction. They will honor Him and live in peace with Israel. Then, God will stretch out His hand to gather the exiles from Assyria, Egypt, Ethiopia and beyond. God will call and gather the scattered Jews from “the four corners of the Earth.” The two Jewish nations, Israel and Judah, will be reconciled and reunited. Does any of this ring a bell?

God will dry up rivers and seas, beating them into streams with paths in between, to serve as highways for all the Jews returning from exile, like the Red Sea when the Jews left Egypt.

11.18.18

The Modern Relevance of an Ancient Voice

Messianic Prophecies and Timelines

Chapter 52:13-15, 53:1-12

Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand. Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the

slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked wand with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Introduction

Throughout history the sufferer has been the astonishment and the stumbling-block of humanity. The ancient barbarians simply got rid of sufferers in their societies - simply because they did not want to look at them in their weakness. More civilized cultures have decidedly been more merciful with them; but sufferers have always been a problem for "big picture ideologies" of philosophers, and a severe test for the "everything is great" faith of religious people. It is not natural or easy for people to see

any good or profit in suffering. In reality it is the contrary that is true. The reality is that mankind struggles with shame and fear of the suffering, or worse the exploitation of the sufferer. Human suffering is easier processed as a tragedy, societal failure, a hindrance to moving on, but most definitely a fate to be avoided in one's life at all costs.

However, for Christian followers the Bible gives us a much different perspective of the sufferer, and of suffering. The suffering component to Christian faith is currently not one of the Top Ten on Sermons.com, nor is it on the New York Times best seller list for inspirational reading. Here's why. The Bible does not hide suffering behind prosperity. In fact, it pushes the reader to brace and embrace suffering as part of the Christian journey in this life. That is why sermons on suffering are not trending; it is not a truth that we remember, pursue or hold dear to our hearts. We hate suffering and do just about anything to avoid it - yet there is real suffering all around us. Remember Jesus saying to His disciples...

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you
(John 15:18).

The apostle Paul tells his young protégé Timothy...

All who live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3).

Paul again...

For the sake of Jesus Christ it is given to you that you should not only believe in Him but that also suffer for Him. (Philippians 1:29).

Peter, a personal friend and disciple of Jesus explained...

For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. What credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But, when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither did deceit come from His mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return: when He suffered He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:19-23).

What we learn from Jesus (if we choose to learn from Him) is that in fact, Jesus Himself learned obedience through the things that He suffered; and if that is true of Him, how much more should it be of us? (PAUSE)

Here's the thing. The Bible does not tell us go out of our way or to seek suffering. We know in the history of the Church that in the name of Christianity some have done that, considering martyrdom or self-abasing, no matter how contrived, to be the highest good - not necessary not required. But, it is also very real and very true - God says that suffering will be a part of the experience of the faithful believers in this world. Jesus

said it clearly - "In this world you will have trouble." So it is inevitable. It is part of God's plan for the development and growth of our faith. But not all suffering is bad.

Suffering can come to believers and followers of Jesus in many forms and from many faces. In our world today - there is actual real-time persecution in many sectors of the world. Other softer persecutions such as malicious hate speech, social media bullying and societal and secular academia rejection do exist **because of our choice of faith (Christianity)**. There are also trials and testing from the Lord, that bring elements of suffering with and for others in the faith community, and then of course there is simply the natural cost of serving a righteous God in this unrighteous world. It is important to understand that these kind of sufferings are a good and faithful service to God, a self-sacrificing service. When we do this we take up our cross, and we have fellowship with Him in His sufferings.

The visual of the suffering of our Lord is nowhere more tragically displayed than in the prophecy of Isaiah, Chapter 52:13-15, 53:1-12. Isaiah's description is of the ultimate Suffering from the ultimate Suffering Servant. Isaiah himself does not fully identify Him—that reveal would have to await until the fulfillment of time when Christ (Emmanuel), came to us - for us - and suffered, the just for the unjust. For us who know Christ we can see this as the actual prediction of His sufferings. This is the primary meaning of Isaiah's text.

Big Point: Our relatable connection to this kind of suffering is that it becomes the example for all suffering that is accomplished in service and love of others. Just as Peter says, Jesus suffered, leaving us an example of how we should suffer to the glory of God.

The passage is divided into five stanzas of three verses each. The Five Three of 53. Do you see what I did there? Ok...

The first line of each of the sections gives a summary of that section. We will start and finish this next week.

11.18.18

The Modern Relevance of an Ancient Voice

Messianic Prophecies and Timelines

Chapter 52:13-15, 53:1-12I.

ONE - MY SERVANT WILL PROSPER – THE SUFFERING LEADS TO GLORY.

(ISAIAH 52:13-15)

The first three verses give us an overview of the section: through the humiliation of suffering the Servant of the LORD will be exalted.

THE SERVANT WILL BE EXALTED (verse13)

This grand theme is announced in the first verse. The Servant will be exalted, be raised on high, will be very high. The significant means of this being accomplished is the fact that he will “deal wisely” or “prosper.” The verb used here describes prudent and practical wisdom. It means that he will live skillfully according to the plan of God so that he may be prosperous and have good success. Jeremiah associates this verb with the prophecy of the Messiah receiving the kingdom (23:5). This point then is that this Servant will prosper as God intends him to.

THE EXALTATION WILL CONTRAST THE HUMILIATION (verses 14, 15)

The theme announced in the first verse is now developed: the exaltation follows humiliation. The humiliation is reported in v. 14: earlier, many were

aghast at him. They were astonished because his form and his visage was so marred. "Marred" is mild. The term used describes a spoiling, a destruction, an appearance-changing affliction. The details of this will be discovered in 53:1-9.

The exaltation is reported in v. 15. Kings are astonished that he, of all people, should be so exalted. The contrast is staggering—he will startle kings ("startle" is preferable to the translation "sprinkle"). When they see God's plan work out, when they look on him whom they pierced, they shall see what they had not been told, they shall understand what they had not heard. In that day, they shall realize what the wisdom of God teaches, that the suffering servant will be exalted.

The point we learn about suffering here is that the suffering Servant prospers with God because he deals wisely. He has insight. This is the point the prophecy makes about the Servant's sufferings—they are practical. He endures them, not for his own sake, but for some practical end of which he is aware and to which they will bring him. The suffering, which seems to be misfortune, is here seen as the Servant's wisdom which will issue in his glory. The first stanza, then, gives us the general theme. In contrast to human experience God reveals in his Servant that suffering is fruitful, that sacrifice is practical. Pain, in God's service, shall lead to glory.

It is this that is at odds with the world. What is success with God is often failure in the eyes of the world. Success with God may not include fame

and fortune, health and happiness—as the world knows them. What is success? Success is knowing the will of God and doing it. The Servant knows that suffering is in God's plan the way to glory.

TWO - WHO HAS BELIEVED"—THE SUFFERING IS OFFENSIVE. (ISAIAH 53:1-3)

The second stanza begins to trace the development of the theme of suffering, first showing that it raises disbelief and thoughtfulness in the people who observe it.

THEY DID NOT BELIEVE THE REPORT (verse 1)

If we paraphrase the first verse we would say something like, "No one ever imagined this." The verse is expressed in the form of questions. The penitent would reflect on the suffering Servant and eventually come to realize God was at work. But that realization would take belief and revelation. For ages Israel did not believe such suffering was at the heart of God's redemptive plan.

THE SUFFERING IS OBSERVED (verses 2, 3)

The response to the suffering Servant is so true to life. On the one hand his beginnings were thought to be insignificant, and on the other hand his sufferings were offensive.

Verse two describes his beginnings: like a tender plant in a parched ground. His beginnings were unlikely. Who would have thought that a "carpenter's son" out of Nazareth would figure prominently in the divine plan. There was nothing appealing or attractive in his appearance that would make Israel rally to him.

Verse three reports that he was despised, that is, looked down on, held in contempt, as well as rejected. His life was filled with grief and sorrows, so that men turned away their faces from him. In short, they did not "esteem him," they didn't think much of him, especially in his condition.

These words illustrate vividly a habit we all share, the habit of letting the eye cheat the conscience, of letting the sight of suffering blind us to the meaning. We dislike pain and suffering; we turn away from it, forgetting that it has a reason, a future, and a God. We look on things so superficially. We make snap judgments about suffering on the surface. Every day we allow the dullness of poverty, the ugliness of disease, the futility of misfortune, the disappointment of failure, to prevent us from realizing that we share the responsibility for them. We allow suffering in others or ourselves to blind us to the fact of the reasons and purposes for sufferings. We consider the sufferer an unlucky person who is falling by the way. The truth is that suffering is part of God's plan to remind us of the human predicament we share, to bring us out of ourselves in sympathy and patience, and to eventually fit us for glory. So it is reasonable that the suffering Servant himself share the suffering of the world to redeem the world.

THREE - SURELY OUR GRIEFS—THE SUFFERING IS VICARIOUS. (ISAIAH 53:4-6)

If people at first make rash observations about the suffering of God's Servant, they are soon led in their conscience to realize its purpose. In this section they realize that the suffering is vicarious.

THE SERVANT'S SUFFERING IS PUNISHMENT (verse 4)

The earliest and most common moral judgment, which people pass on pain, is that which is implied in its name—that is penal. People suffer because God is angry with them. That is what Job's visitors concluded about his suffering. Here, Israel says, "We esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." That is, they saw the suffering Servant and thought God was striking him.

But now they knew they were wrong. The hand of God was indeed upon the Servant, and the reason was sin, yet the sin was not his, but theirs. Verse 4 makes this clear, and verses 5 and 6 amplify it.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE SERVANT WAS REDEMPTIVE (verses 5, 6)

Note the parallelism of this fifth verse: "he was wounded for our transgressions" and "he was crushed for our iniquities." The contrast is between "he" and "our." All his suffering was because of our rebellions and sins.

The second set of expressions clarify the purpose of this vicarious or substitutionary suffering as redemptive: “The chastisement of our peace” and “by his stripes we are healed.” All interpreters of this verse agree that the peace, the healing, is ours in consequence of the chastisement and scourging. The pain was his in consequence of the sin that was ours—that is, the suffering was vicarious. And the pain brought spiritual healing and peace—that is, the suffering was redemptive.

That the suffering is vicarious and redemptive is confessed by Israel in verse 6: “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. The verse begins and ends with “all.” Substitutionary suffering of this Servant touches all who have sinned—and we know that that is all of us.

In every family, in every nation, the innocent suffer for the guilty. Vicarious suffering is not arbitrary or accidental; it comes with our growth, it is of the very nature of life. It is that part of the service of humankind, to which we are all born, and of the reality of which we daily grow more aware.

Vicarious suffering is not a curse. It is service—service to God. It proves to be a power where every other moral force has failed. This is very intelligible, because it is based on love. Any parents who have suffered and sacrificed for their children can understand the impulse.

But people argue that vicarious suffering is unjust. They forget, however, that there are two reasons people endure suffering in this world—justice and love. We often suffer because we ourselves are not innocent. We share the cause of pain in the world. This is justice. But to suffer in service to God is a demonstration of love. The epitome of this is the suffering Servant. Not only is his suffering vicarious—it is voluntary. Human experience feels it has found its highest and holiest form of love when the innocent is willing to take the blame for others. “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,” and greater spiritual service can no one do for others, than to suffer with them and for them that they might be healed spiritually.

But, of course, the suffering of this Servant far outdistanced human vicarious suffering (and it is here the nature of the Servant begins to unfold): his suffering removes sin. We may observe a Moses interceding for the sinful people, asking God to take his life so that wrath could be averted from those worshiping the golden calf. That is noble; it's magnificent. But it cannot remove sin. God himself had to carry the sins of his people. What all vicarious suffering had failed to do in Israel's experience, the suffering of our Lord accomplished. Centuries after this oracle was written our divine Lord came and fulfilled to the letter the words of this prophecy. His vicarious suffering would strike the heart into penitence and lift it to peace with God.

FOUR - OPPRESSED HE HUMBLER HIMSELF—THE SUFFERING IS ACCEPTED. (ISAIAH 53:7-9)

If the third stanza confessed that it was for the sins of the people the Servant suffered, the fourth stanza declares that he himself was sinless, and yet silently submitted to all which injustice laid on him.

THE SUFFERING SERVANT IS SILENT (verse 7)

What is so remarkable is that although he was afflicted and oppressed, he did not open his mouth. Such a thing is almost unheard of in the Old Testament. No one else could remain silent under pain. In the Old Testament sufferers broke out into one of two voices—the voice of guilt or the voice of doubt. The sufferer is either confessing his sin which the suffering has called to his attention or, when he feels no guilt, he is protesting his suffering, challenging God in argument. David, Jeremiah, Job, and countless others, including us we must confess, are not silent under pain. We confess that we deserve it, or complain that we do not.

Not so with the suffering Servant. He did not open his mouth, but was silent like a sheep led to the slaughter. Why was this Servant the unique sample of silence under suffering? Because he knew the truth. It had been said of him in 52:13: "My servant shall deal wisely." He knew what he was about. He had no guilt of his own, and no doubts of God. He knew that it was not punishment he was enduring for himself, but that it was a service he was performing—a service laid on him by God, a service for man's

redemption, a service sure of results that were glorious. If anything will enable a person to accept silently his suffering it is this—the knowledge that the suffering was service to God.

THE SUFFERING SERVANT IS INNOCENT (verses 8, 9)

The prophet reports that the Servant was innocent. He had done no violence; no guile was found in him. Yet he was taken to judgment by tyrannical powers. It was judicial murder. And when they considered that he was lawfully put to death, they consistently gave him a convict's grave. On this note the stanza ends. He was innocent, but he willingly submitted to the oppression, an oppression that carried him to an ignominious burial. From all appearances, an innocent man's life ended fruitlessly. But nothing could be further from the truth.

FIVE - THE LORD WAS PLEASED—THE SUFFERING WAS INVALUABLE (ISAIAH 53:10-12)

It appeared to many that the death of this Servant was an awful tragedy. It was utterly a perversion of justice. Surely here passed into oblivion the fairest life that ever lived. People might see and say, God forsakes his own. On the contrary, the fifth stanza begins, God's will and pleasure was in it.

THE SUFFERING WAS GOD'S WILL (verse 10)

"It pleased the LORD to bruise him" begins the theological explanation of the suffering. The verb "pleased" does not mean enjoyment. It basically means that God willed the suffering. It is that kind of pleasure. This is the one message which can render any pain tolerable—God willed it—it is his pleasure. Thus, any that God calls to suffer for his service should make it their purpose to do his will, to please him. Therein is success with God.

THE SUFFERING WAS FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION (verse 11)

This suffering was efficacious, that is, it was powerful to effect its intended results: the justification of sinners. God made this Servant a sin (guilt) offering for many, so that by their knowledge of him they might be justified. In the Upper Room Jesus alluded to this passage by saying that the cup was His blood of the New Covenant "poured out for many." That brought the remission of sins. So the effect of the suffering of our Lord is full atonement. Paul says that he made him to be sin (here, "sin offering") for us that we might become righteous (here, "justify") (2 Cor. 5). For those of us who have come to know him by faith this suffering will receive eternal praise. We, the guilty sinners, have been declared righteous before God.

THE SUFFERING WILL LEAD TO EXALTATION (verses 11, 12)

With this note the passage comes full circle. God was satisfied, yea, pleased with the obedient suffering of the Servant, whom we know to be our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Because he bore the sins of many, that is, because he made "intercession" for sinners in his self-sacrificing love, God appointed him to honor and glory. Using military terminology Isaiah declares that the Lord will divide the spoil.

And so it was at this point, according to the prophecy, that the Servant, though brought so low, was nearest his exaltation; though in death, yet nearest life, nearest the highest kind of life, the "seeing of a seed," the finding himself in others; though despised, rejected, and forgotten of men, most certain of finding his place of exaltation with God. Before him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord.

Conclusion

Isaiah, then, presents us with a picture of the ideal suffering Servant. He does not identify the Servant in his prophecy, but we who know the Lord Jesus Christ can see that it is He. The suffering of our Lord corresponds to the letter with the picture Isaiah draws. Nothing else can. The suffering of Jesus was vicarious in a way that no other has or ever could be—he took our sins on himself and made full atonement for them. While we were yet sinners, he died for us. He himself knew no sin, but suffered, the just for the unjust, that we, sinners, might become righteous before God.

Jesus knew full well the purpose of his suffering, and willingly submitted to it as his service to God the Father in order to provide for us salvation. There is no peace with God apart from the chastisement that he, the sinless Son of God, bore. We have no healing for our souls, no removal of our sins, no justification before God, apart from the penal suffering of Christ, the substitutionary death in which he took our sins upon himself. That is why the church worships and serves him—he brought to us eternal life. This 53rd chapter of Isaiah prophesied it, and Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in the fullness of time.

But in addition to this truth, there is an additional application, a secondary application that flows from this. Once we trust Christ as our Savior, we are made members of his mystical body, and are therefore called to follow him. It is the will of God that we demonstrate the same type of sacrificial love that he had. If we are to love one another in Christ, we must realize that it will cost something. If we are to bear one another's burdens, it will mean that we will have to put ourselves out for others, to suffer with them, to give of our time, our talents, and our finances. We are called to a life of self-sacrificing love for others. And Christ shows us what that should look like.

The Lord may call on us to suffer and even perhaps to die. If that should be his will, then we must seek to suffer and to die well. It is far more important for us to do his will, to please him, than to have a comfortable, carefree life.

If we Christians have learned to see in sufferings the purpose of God, and in vicarious suffering God's most holy service; if patience and self-sacrifice have come to be part of our spiritual life—the power to make this change in our faith has been Christ's example. To submit to God's will and to sacrifice self are the hardest things for us to do; to accept suffering and death without complaint or doubt demands a living faith that sees suffering and death as a prelude to glory. But if we submit to God's will and sacrifice self for others, or for the building up of the faith of others, we shall then be living out the love of Christ in this world, and please our heavenly Father.

11.25.18

The Modern Relevance of an Ancient Voice

Messianic Prophecies and Timelines

Chapter 52:13-15, 53:1-12

**ONE - MY SERVANT WILL PROSPER – THE SUFFERING LEADS TO GLORY
(ISAIAH 52:13-15)**

The first three verses give us an overview of the section: through the humiliation of suffering the Servant of the LORD will be exalted.

THE SERVANT WILL BE EXALTED (verse13)

This grand theme is announced in the first verse. The Servant will be exalted, be raised on high, will be very high. The significant means of this being accomplished is the fact that he will “deal wisely” or “prosper.” The verb used here describes prudent and practical wisdom. It means that he will live skillfully according to the plan of God so that he may be prosperous and have good success. Jeremiah associates this verb with the prophecy of the Messiah receiving the kingdom (23:5). This point then is that this Servant will prosper as God intends him to.

THE EXALTATION WILL CONTRAST THE HUMILIATION (verses 14, 15)

The theme announced in the first verse is now developed: the exaltation follows humiliation. The humiliation is reported in v. 14: earlier, many were

aghast at him. They were astonished because his form and his visage was so marred. "Marred" is mild. The term used describes a spoiling, a destruction, an appearance-changing affliction. The details of this will be discovered in 53:1-9.

The exaltation is reported in v. 15. Kings are astonished that he, of all people, should be so exalted. The contrast is staggering—he will startle kings ("startle" is preferable to the translation "sprinkle"). When they see God's plan work out, when they look on him whom they pierced, they shall see what they had not been told, they shall understand what they had not heard. In that day, they shall realize what the wisdom of God teaches, that the suffering servant will be exalted.

The point we learn about suffering here is that the suffering Servant prospers with God because he deals wisely. He has insight. This is the point the prophecy makes about the Servant's sufferings—they are practical. He endures them, not for his own sake, but for some practical end of which he is aware and to which they will bring him. The suffering, which seems to be misfortune, is here seen as the Servant's wisdom which will issue in his glory. The first stanza, then, gives us the general theme. In contrast to human experience God reveals in his Servant that suffering is fruitful, that sacrifice is practical. Pain, in God's service, shall lead to glory.

It is this that is at odds with the world. What is success with God is often failure in the eyes of the world. Success with God may not include fame

and fortune, health and happiness—as the world knows them. What is success? Success is knowing the will of God and doing it. The Servant knows that suffering is in God's plan the way to glory.

TWO - WHO HAS BELIEVED – THE SUFFERING IS OFFENSIVE (ISAIAH 53:1-3)

The second stanza begins to trace the development of the theme of suffering, first showing that it raises disbelief and thoughtfulness in the people who observe it.

THEY DID NOT BELIEVE THE REPORT (verse 1)

If we paraphrase the first verse we would say something like, “No one ever imagined this.” The verse is expressed in the form of questions. The penitent would reflect on the suffering Servant and eventually come to realize God was at work. But that realization would take belief and revelation. For ages Israel did not believe such suffering was at the heart of God's redemptive plan.

THE SUFFERING IS OBSERVED (verses 2, 3)

The response to the suffering Servant is so true to life. On the one hand his beginnings were thought to be insignificant, and on the other hand his sufferings were offensive.

Verse two describes his beginnings: like a tender plant in a parched ground. His beginnings were unlikely. Who would have thought that a "carpenter's son" out of Nazareth would figure prominently in the divine plan. There was nothing appealing or attractive in his appearance that would make Israel rally to him.

Verse three reports that he was despised, that is, looked down on, held in contempt, as well as rejected. His life was filled with grief and sorrows, so that men turned away their faces from him. In short, they did not "esteem him," they didn't think much of him, especially in his condition.

These words illustrate vividly a habit we all share, the habit of letting the eye cheat the conscience, of letting the sight of suffering blind us to the meaning. We dislike pain and suffering; we turn away from it, forgetting that it has a reason, a future, and a God. We look on things so superficially. We make snap judgments about suffering on the surface. Every day we allow the dullness of poverty, the ugliness of disease, the futility of misfortune, the disappointment of failure, to prevent us from realizing that we share the responsibility for them. We allow suffering in others or ourselves to blind us to the fact of the reasons and purposes for sufferings. We consider the sufferer an unlucky person who is falling by the way. The truth is that suffering is part of God's plan to remind us of the human predicament we share, to bring us out of ourselves in sympathy and patience, and to eventually fit us for glory. So it is reasonable that the suffering Servant himself share the suffering of the world to redeem the world.

THREE - SURELY OUR GRIEFS—THE SUFFERING IS VICARIOUS (ISAIAH 53:4-6)

If people at first make rash observations about the suffering of God's Servant, they are soon led in their conscience to realize its purpose. In this section they realize that the suffering is vicarious.

THE SERVANT'S SUFFERING IS PUNISHMENT (verse 4)

The earliest and most common moral judgment, which people pass on pain, is that which is implied in its name—that is penal. People suffer because God is angry with them. That is what Job's visitors concluded about his suffering. Here, Israel says, "We esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." That is, they saw the suffering Servant and thought God was striking him.

But now they knew they were wrong. The hand of God was indeed upon the Servant, and the reason was sin, yet the sin was not his, but theirs. Verse 4 makes this clear, and verses 5 and 6 amplify it.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE SERVANT WAS REDEMPTIVE (verses 5, 6)

Note the parallelism of this fifth verse: "he was wounded for our transgressions" and "he was crushed for our iniquities." The contrast is between "he" and "our." All his suffering was because of our rebellions and sins.

The second set of expressions clarify the purpose of this vicarious or substitutionary suffering as redemptive: “The chastisement of our peace” and “by his stripes we are healed.” All interpreters of this verse agree that the peace, the healing, is ours in consequence of the chastisement and scourging. The pain was his in consequence of the sin that was ours—that is, the suffering was vicarious. And the pain brought spiritual healing and peace—that is, the suffering was redemptive.

That the suffering is vicarious and redemptive is confessed by Israel in verse 6: “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. The verse begins and ends with “all.” Substitutionary suffering of this Servant touches all who have sinned—and we know that that is all of us.

In every family, in every nation, the innocent suffer for the guilty. Vicarious suffering is not arbitrary or accidental; it comes with our growth, it is of the very nature of life. It is that part of the service of humankind, to which we are all born, and of the reality of which we daily grow more aware.

Vicarious suffering is not a curse. It is service—service to God. It proves to be a power where every other moral force has failed. This is very intelligible, because it is based on love. Any parents who have suffered and sacrificed for their children can understand the impulse.

But people argue that vicarious suffering is unjust. They forget, however, that there are two reasons people endure suffering in this world—justice and love. We often suffer because we ourselves are not innocent. We share the cause of pain in the world. This is justice. But to suffer in service to God is a demonstration of love. The epitome of this is the suffering Servant. Not only is his suffering vicarious—it is voluntary. Human experience feels it has found its highest and holiest form of love when the innocent is willing to take the blame for others. “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,” and greater spiritual service can no one do for others, than to suffer with them and for them that they might be healed spiritually.

But, of course, the suffering of this Servant far outdistanced human vicarious suffering (and it is here the nature of the Servant begins to unfold): his suffering removes sin. We may observe a Moses interceding for the sinful people, asking God to take his life so that wrath could be averted from those worshiping the golden calf. That is noble; it's magnificent. But it cannot remove sin. God himself had to carry the sins of his people. What all vicarious suffering had failed to do in Israel's experience, the suffering of our Lord accomplished. Centuries after this oracle was written our divine Lord came and fulfilled to the letter the words of this prophecy. His vicarious suffering would strike the heart into penitence and lift it to peace with God.

FOUR - OPPRESSED HE HUMBLER HIMSELF – THE SUFFERING IS ACCEPTED (ISAIAH 53:7-9)

If the third stanza confessed that it was for the sins of the people the Servant suffered, the fourth stanza declares that he himself was sinless, and yet silently submitted to all which injustice laid on him.

THE SUFFERING SERVANT IS SILENT (verse 7)

What is so remarkable is that although he was afflicted and oppressed, he did not open his mouth. Such a thing is almost unheard of in the Old Testament. No one else could remain silent under pain. In the Old Testament sufferers broke out into one of two voices—the voice of guilt or the voice of doubt. The sufferer is either confessing his sin which the suffering has called to his attention or, when he feels no guilt, he is protesting his suffering, challenging God in argument. David, Jeremiah, Job, and countless others, including us we must confess, are not silent under pain. We confess that we deserve it, or complain that we do not.

Not so with the suffering Servant. He did not open his mouth, but was silent like a sheep led to the slaughter. Why was this Servant the unique sample of silence under suffering? Because he knew the truth. It had been said of him in 52:13: "My servant shall deal wisely." He knew what he was about. He had no guilt of his own, and no doubts of God. He knew that it was not punishment he was enduring for himself, but that it was a service he was performing—a service laid on him by God, a service for man's

redemption, a service sure of results that were glorious. If anything will enable a person to accept silently his suffering it is this—the knowledge that the suffering was service to God.

THE SUFFERING SERVANT IS INNOCENT (verses 8, 9)

The prophet reports that the Servant was innocent. He had done no violence; no guile was found in him. Yet he was taken to judgment by tyrannical powers. It was judicial murder. And when they considered that he was lawfully put to death, they consistently gave him a convict's grave. On this note the stanza ends. He was innocent, but he willingly submitted to the oppression, an oppression that carried him to an ignominious burial. From all appearances, an innocent man's life ended fruitlessly. But nothing could be further from the truth.

FIVE - THE LORD WAS PLEASED—THE SUFFERING WAS INVALUABLE (ISAIAH 53:10-12)

It appeared to many that the death of this Servant was an awful tragedy. It was utterly a perversion of justice. Surely here passed into oblivion the fairest life that ever lived. People might see and say, God forsakes his own. On the contrary, the fifth stanza begins, God's will and pleasure was in it.

THE SUFFERING WAS GOD'S WILL (verse 10)

"It pleased the LORD to bruise him" begins the theological explanation of the suffering. The verb "pleased" does not mean enjoyment. It basically means that God willed the suffering. It is that kind of pleasure. This is the one message which can render any pain tolerable—God willed it—it is his pleasure. Thus, any that God calls to suffer for his service should make it their purpose to do his will, to please him. Therein is success with God.

THE SUFFERING WAS FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION (verse 11)

This suffering was efficacious, that is, it was powerful to effect its intended results: the justification of sinners. God made this Servant a sin (guilt) offering for many, so that by their knowledge of him they might be justified. In the Upper Room Jesus alluded to this passage by saying that the cup was His blood of the New Covenant "poured out for many." That brought the remission of sins. So the effect of the suffering of our Lord is full atonement. Paul says that he made him to be sin (here, "sin offering") for us that we might become righteous (here, "justify") (2 Cor. 5). For those of us who have come to know him by faith this suffering will receive eternal praise. We, the guilty sinners, have been declared righteous before God.

THE SUFFERING WILL LEAD TO EXALTATION (verses 11, 12)

With this note the passage comes full circle. God was satisfied, yea, pleased with the obedient suffering of the Servant, whom we know to be our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Because he bore the sins of many, that is, because he made "intercession" for sinners in his self-sacrificing love, God appointed him to honor and glory. Using military terminology Isaiah declares that the Lord will divide the spoil.

And so it was at this point, according to the prophecy, that the Servant, though brought so low, was nearest his exaltation; though in death, yet nearest life, nearest the highest kind of life, the "seeing of a seed," the finding himself in others; though despised, rejected, and forgotten of men, most certain of finding his place of exaltation with God. Before him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord.

Conclusion

Isaiah, then, presents us with a picture of the ideal suffering Servant. He does not identify the Servant in his prophecy, but we who know the Lord Jesus Christ can see that it is He. The suffering of our Lord corresponds to the letter with the picture Isaiah draws. Nothing else can. The suffering of Jesus was vicarious in a way that no other has or ever could be—he took our sins on himself and made full atonement for them. While we were yet sinners, he died for us. He himself knew no sin, but suffered, the just for the unjust, that we, sinners, might become righteous before God.

Jesus knew full well the purpose of his suffering, and willingly submitted to it as his service to God the Father in order to provide for us salvation. There is no peace with God apart from the chastisement that he, the sinless Son of God, bore. We have no healing for our souls, no removal of our sins, no justification before God, apart from the penal suffering of Christ, the substitutionary death in which he took our sins upon himself. That is why the church worships and serves him—he brought to us eternal life. This 53rd chapter of Isaiah prophesied it, and Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in the fullness of time.

But in addition to this truth, there is an additional application, a secondary application that flows from this. Once we trust Christ as our Savior, we are made members of his mystical body, and are therefore called to follow him. It is the will of God that we demonstrate the same type of sacrificial love that he had. If we are to love one another in Christ, we must realize that it will cost something. If we are to bear one another's burdens, it will mean that we will have to put ourselves out for others, to suffer with them, to give of our time, our talents, and our finances. We are called to a life of self-sacrificing love for others. And Christ shows us what that should look like.

The Lord may call on us to suffer and even perhaps to die. If that should be his will, then we must seek to suffer and to die well. It is far more important for us to do his will, to please him, than to have a comfortable, carefree life.

If we Christians have learned to see in sufferings the purpose of God, and in vicarious suffering God's most holy service; if patience and self-sacrifice have come to be part of our spiritual life—the power to make this change in our faith has been Christ's example. To submit to God's will and to sacrifice self are the hardest things for us to do; to accept suffering and death without complaint or doubt demands a living faith that sees suffering and death as a prelude to glory. But if we submit to God's will and sacrifice self for others, or for the building up of the faith of others, we shall then be living out the love of Christ in this world, and please our heavenly Father.